UPDATE

Hispanic group votes to move convention

Lawyers reject boycott, vow to work for repeal

By **Jim Buynak** and **Ray Flack**
Gazette Telegraph

Hispanic journalists voted Saturday to move their convention from Denver because of the furor over Amendment 2, while Colorado lawyers opted to keep their meeting in Colorado Springs, birthplace of the controversial law.

The 13-3 vote by the board of the National Association of Hispanic Journalists reverses a November decision to stay in Denver. The city had counted the group its first victory in a feverish lobbying attempt to counter the boycott over Amendment 2, which bars laws providing civil rights protections based on sexual orientation.

"The public perception of our going there got out of hand," said association president Diane Alverio from the Miami Beach, Fla., hotel where the board met.

"We were becoming the issue. We originally intended to go to Colorado to focus attention on the (gay and lesbian) issue. It's the pre-eminent civil rights issue of the '90s. But it no longer became the focus and we became the focus."

Meanwhile, the governing board of the Colorado Bar Association voted 53-23 to reject a motion to move its five-day October meeting from The Broadmoor to a county that opposed the amendment.

See **BOYCOTT**/B3

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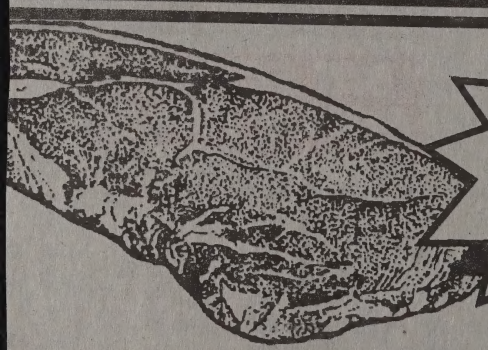

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Boycott/Cities count losses

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Although the bar association has taken a stand against discrimination based on sexual orientation, some members said a Colorado group boycotting a Colorado city would send the wrong message to the rest of the nation.

"We're not going to find a solution to this problem in El Paso County alone," said Springs attorney David Griffith. "We're going to have to do it together."

The convention, which has been at The Broadmoor for 75 years except in 1990 and 1992, is expected to attract more than 700 lawyers from across Colorado and pump an estimated $1 million into the city's economy.

Denver, on the other hand, stands to lose an estimated $500,000 from the journalist convention — all told, it has lost an estimated $15 million in convention business since passage of the amendment Nov. 3. The March event had been expected to draw 1,000 members.

The Hispanic group is uncertain where it will meet instead.

The change by the journalists comes a day after the League of United Latin American Citizens, a leading Latino civil rights group, vowed to fight the boycott of Colorado because it threatens the income of many Hispanics.

"I hope some will respect our decision because of how emotional and difficult it was," said Alverio, the Hispanic journalists' leader.

The vote also comes days after the National Lesbian and fired, kicked out of their home or school. They can be denied health care or insurance and are shut out of the legal system."

Attorney Greg Walta, also of Colorado Springs, called Amendment 2 "a terrible human rights disaster" and said he and other lawyers were working to repeal the amendment through another statewide vote.

He said nothing specific has been decided, but "we're going to come up with a solution to this problem. Colorado Springs is going to surprise us all."

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

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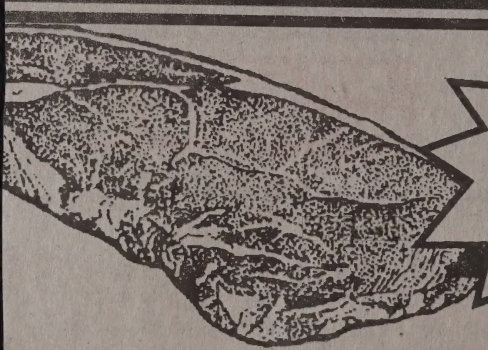

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The vote also comes days after the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists voted to boycott the Hispanic event unless the convention was moved. The gay journalists' association praised the action Saturday and vowed to help the Hispanic group recover any losses.

"We understand the difficulty and we are gratified by this decision," said Leroy Aarons, president of the gay journalists' group. "We think it's a victory for a free press and for minority journalists everywhere."

Ernest Gurule, vice president of the organization and a reporter with KWGN-TV in Denver, disagreed.

"My position as a journalist is, you fight hate with knowledge," said Gurule, who voted against the move. "By not being there, we're not going to attend the fight."

The Colorado lawyers decided to fight the amendment in other ways.

They called for a public demonstration in Colorado Springs during the Oct. 6-10 convention. They also voted to ask the Colorado Springs City Council to pass a resolution saying it welcomes the bar association "and all its gay and lesbian members."

And, they approved a motion favoring repeal of the amendment and supporting a lawsuit that seeks to have the amendment declared unconstitutional. A hearing on the suit is set for Monday in Denver District Court.

Colorado Springs attorney Craig Cornish said the amendment "strips the basic civil rights of 4 to 10 percent of our citizens. It allows them to be fired, kicked out of their home or school. They can be denied health care or insurance and are shut out of the legal system."

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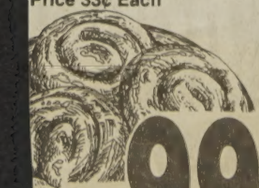

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